



Assisting Community-Based Redevelopment

Omaha, Nebraska

Omaha, Nebraska, has always been dependent on the heavy industrial activity facilitated by its location alongside the Missouri River. Over time, this transportation resource has been taken for granted. A port that had once been successful became under used and neglected as businesses and residents moved out of the area; fear of potential contamination and environmental liability hindered redevelopment efforts. In response to these problems, a Brownfields Pilot awarded by EPA coordinated efforts among local developers, state and federal programs, and the surrounding community in an attempt to reverse this decline. The resulting transformation of three riverfront properties has leveraged 750 jobs and more than \$140 million toward the restoration of Omaha's waterfront area.

The three properties targeted by the Brownfields Pilot—the Miller property, the City Dock Board property, and Freedom Park—are located on prime riverfront land, with easy access to downtown and the interstate. These properties had been used for a variety of industrial activities, including lead smelting, scrap metal recycling, and railroad operations. Fear of potential contamination, however, discouraged potential purchasers and developers from taking advantage of these properties' locations.

When the city applied for and received a \$200,000 grant from EPA to address these brownfields, it became clear that the community, local businesses, and developers shared a strong desire to revitalize Omaha's waterfront. The Brownfields Pilot performed assessments on all three targeted riverfront properties. The Pilot initially planned to address only the Dock Board property, but the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the work allowed for expansion of the Pilot's efforts. Following preliminary assessments of the Dock Board property, the Pilot received \$120,000 from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a more detailed environmental investigation, while initial assessments at Freedom Park and the Miller property indicated that no further investigation was necessary. The Dock Board property was cleaned up in 2004 with



A view of Pilot-targeted brownfields along Omaha's riverfront

JUST THE FACTS:

- The Brownfields Pilot performed assessments on three sites along Omaha's riverfront.
- The Pilot initially planned to address only one site, but the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the work allowed for expansion of the Pilot's efforts.
- The resulting transformation of the three Pilot-targeted riverfront properties has leveraged 750 jobs and more than \$140 million toward the restoration of Omaha's waterfront area.

Omaha's EPA Brownfields Pilot has been aided through its partnership with the "Back to the River" Initiative, an initiative organized by local citizens to ensure that the area is re-developed in accordance with the wishes of the community. The Pilot and Initiative agreed that the targeted properties should be built with sustainable, long-term uses in mind, and that those reuses should benefit all community members.

assistance from Nebraska's Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP). The Pilot also has been aided through its partnership with the "Back to the River" Initiative, an initiative run by local citizens organized to ensure the area is redeveloped in accordance with the wishes of the community. The Pilot and Initiative agreed that the waterfront property should be built with sustainable, long-term use in mind, and that the property's reuse should benefit all community members. Keeping these needs in mind, much of the redeveloped land will be made available to the public for recreational uses.

The Gallup Corporation has invested \$81 million in the City Dock Board property as the new location of its headquarters and corporate campus. Construction was completed on this project in June 2003 and the building has been occupied since November 2003. Former Senator Bob Kerrey envisions a timeless symbol for downtown Omaha, stating, "We ought to be thinking about having something that lasts forever." In an effort to make this redevelopment a symbol for others to see and follow, officials wanted to make a statement; a \$23 million pedestrian bridge over the Missouri River will do just that. The bridge currently is being redesigned and will be built with contributions from federal, state, and local partners. A riverfront trail system has been made possible by a federal transportation bill that authorized \$4.8 million for the project. This trail is currently under construction and will provide a

new alternative for commuter traffic and a path to recreational greenspace. Located in and around the surrounding region, these trails will offer access to water, a park area, and an amphitheater. Adjacent to these areas stands a new \$35 million National Park Service Regional Headquarters, which opened in May 2004.



Redevelopment in progress on one of Omaha's riverfront brownfields

As the Brownfields Pilot continues to work with the state's VCP, Omaha's riverfront will once again become a place where people come to work and relax. When redevelopment on these brownfields is complete, there will be 64 miles of trails throughout the area, allowing the public to enjoy new parks and an amphitheater on land that had always been conveniently close. The redevelopment movement that began locally has been supplemented with federal assistance and the people of Omaha are indeed coming back to the river.

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Visit the EPA Brownfields web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>